



**Many young children have undetected vision problems
that may cause them to miss key developmental milestones
& start kindergarten unprepared to learn.**

Thank you for partnering with us to give children the healthy start they need to thrive.

What is FocusFirst?

FocusFirst AmeriCorps members and trained student volunteers travel to all 67 counties throughout Alabama to conduct free screenings using state-of-the-art technology. Our cameras can detect more potential problems than a simple eye-chart test, especially in preschool-aged children who haven't learned their letters yet. The screening process is non-invasive -- as simple as taking a photograph. There are no eye drops needed. FocusFirst partners with Vision Research Corporation to professionally analyze the results and Sight Savers America to guarantee all children with potential problems have access to medical treatment.

How can FocusFirst Help?

Undetected vision problems can lead to difficulty with learning to read, slow social development and, in some cases, even permanent blindness. Vision screenings are most effective in the preschool years when early identification and treatment of many conditions can prevent irreversible vision loss. When a child is young, the visual system is developing. Treatment options that are very effective during a child's early years offer little or no benefit later in life. For this reason, early vision screening and effective follow-up are vitally important.



How Does the Screening Work?

FocusFirst uses a special camera, originally developed by NASA, to take a photograph of the child's eyes. The image is later analyzed for abnormalities at Vision Research Corporation in Birmingham, Alabama.

- No need for eye drops
- Unlike the eye chart method, requires no response from a pre or non-verbal child
- Can screen children as young as six months
- Detects a wide range of eye abnormalities (cataracts, astigmatism, alignment problems, etc.)



Normal



Nearsightedness



Farsightedness



Anisometropia

Do I Need Permission Forms?

Before the screening, you will be sent a form for each child in your classroom. Please be proactive about getting the enclosed forms completed. Ensure that parents understand the importance of early screening and intervention. We suggest asking parents to sign the forms at check-in or check-out. If parents do not wish for their child to be screened, they must write "NO" in the appropriate box on the screening form. **Because our screening method is noninvasive and poses no risks, FocusFirst may legally screen all children without completed forms, unless you choose to require parent signatures.** However, a signed form is preferred as it allows us to quickly contact parents for any children who fail the screening.

Volunteers

Part of FocusFirst's mission is to increase civic awareness among college students. If volunteers attend, they will be supervised at all times by a FocusFirst staff person. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are opposed to having volunteers assist with the screening.

On the Day of the Screening

Our screener will arrive 30 minutes early to set up. **Please let us know if you will not have an extra staff person available to assist in the screening room.** Screening time can vary from 30 seconds to several minutes per child, depending on age and behavior, the room (see below), and the number of adults assisting. **FocusFirst screens children 6 months and up.**



Choosing a Room

Please designate a room that can be made dark enough for children's eyes to dilate. The screener will have black plastic to use over windows or doorways if necessary, but too many windows or a non-enclosed space may cause problems. The screening process requires a space at least 12 feet in length. If the room is large enough, it can be much faster to have 2-3 infants or a whole class of toddlers/preschoolers in the room at one time.

Results

Results will be sent to your center 4 to 6 weeks after the screening. The packet will include individual results for parents as well as a summary booklet of all results for the director.

Follow Up Vision Care

FocusFirst works with Sight Savers America (www.sightsaversamerica.com) to provide free or reduced cost vision care when needed. For children who fail the screening, we will follow-up directly with parents or with the childcare center if contact information and a parent signature are not on the form.

YOUR SCREENING CONFIRMATION

Your screener will call a few days before the screening to confirm the appointment.

If you have any further questions, please contact us at 205.934.0664 or visit us at www.impactalabama.org.
Thank you! We look forward to working with your classroom soon.